

## Decision Making

## STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Understand that characters in literature face decisions
- Suggest options for a character who faces a decision
- Show that each option leads to a consequence, which leads to an outcome
- Weigh alternative decision paths to determine the most likely

## RESOURCES AND PREPARATION

You will need photocopies for students of:

- **Student Lesson Summary**, p. 147
- **Practice Worksheets**, Levels A and B, pp. 148–149
- **Reteaching Worksheet**, p. 150

You will also need:

- Transparency: **Graphic Organizer**, Decision Tree

## Teach

1. **Decision Making in Literature:** Summarize for students the beginning of Judith Viorst's short story "The Southpaw." *Janet is angry at Richard for not picking her as pitcher, for his all-boy baseball team. Richard offers no apology. Then as the season gets underway, Janet sends notes to Richard making fun of his team for its poor play. Eventually, with losses piling up and players falling ill, Richard breaks down and asks Janet to join the team but not in the position of pitcher.*

- Read aloud Richard's letter to Janet as follows:

## EXAMPLE

"Dear Janet,

Alfie is having his tonsils out tomorrow. We might be able to let you catch next week.

Richard"

—from "The Southpaw," by Judith Viorst

- Ask: What decision must Janet make at this point? (*Whether to join Richard's team*)
  - Ask: What are Janet's options? (*1. join the team as catcher; 2. refuse to join—unless she can be pitcher*)
  - Explain that for every decision a character faces in literature there are a limited number of options or choices he or she can make. Each option has different consequences and those consequences have different possible outcomes.
2. **Teaching Decision Making in Literature:** Distribute copies of the **Lesson Summary**, and guide students through the **Academic Vocabulary**. Then lead students through **Steps 1–4**, discussing how the steps can be applied to Janet's situation, described above. At the same time, display the transparency **Graphic Organizer**, Decision Tree. Elicit responses from students and use them to fill in the **Graphic Organizer** as follows:

## DECISION MAKING, CONTINUED

- **Decision as Question:** Ask students to determine the question facing Janet. The question they generate should be placed in the rectangular box on the “Decision Tree.” (Sample: *What will Janet decide to do about Richard’s invitation?*)
- **Possible Paths:** Next have students brainstorm possible options for Janet. Write these on the “Decision Tree,” beginning on the right and moving to the left. Model one or two options such as the following:
  - Option 1: Janet accepts the position of catcher on Richard’s team.
  - Option 2: Janet holds out to see if Richard will offer her the job of pitcher.
  - Option 3: For spite, Janet refuses to join the team at all.
- **Consequences:** Have students suggest the immediate consequences of the different options and then write them on the transparency. Suggest one of the following samples to get them started:
  - For Option 1: Janet accepts the position of catcher but complains about the pitcher’s errors.
  - For Option 2: Janet eventually is offered and accepts the position of pitcher.
  - For Option 3: Janet and Richard become angrier and meaner.
- **Long-Term Outcome:** Have students predict the long-term outcomes that might result from each of the short-term consequences they listed. Possible responses:
  - For Option 1: Janet’s complaints cause the morale of the team to deteriorate.
  - For Option 2: Richard and Janet patch up their friendship.
  - For Option 3: Richard and Janet stop communicating.
- **The “Right” Choice:** Give students a chance to debate which decision path the character Janet would most likely choose. Remind them to consider what they have learned about Janet in particular and what they know about human nature in general. Ask them to discuss which decision leads to the best resolution or long term outcome. Discuss how the decision might shape the plot of the story as well as how it may cause the characters to change.

**QUICK CHECK.** Ask students to suggest examples from history or from their own lives of the immediate and the long-term effects of a decision. (Sample: *Japan’s invasion of America at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, resulted in the sinking or disabling of 19 American ships. The long-term effect was to bring the Americans into the war and turn the tide against the Germans and the Japanese.*)

### Practice and Apply

Two worksheets on decision making appear on pp. 148–149.

- Assign Practice **Worksheet A** to students who need more structured activities.
- Assign Practice **Worksheet B** to grade-level and above-level students.

## DECISION MAKING, CONTINUED

### Answer Key: Practice Worksheet A

1. *a*
2. *b*
3. *a*
4. *(Sample: an immediate consequence of Harry's decision to keep visiting his father might be that his friends tease him; a final outcome of that decision and that immediate consequence might be his friends' abandoning Harry.)*

### Answer Key: Practice Worksheet B

- a. *Sample Question: How will Harry spend his after-school time when he is in junior high school?*
- b. *Sample Options: Option 1: Harry keeps visiting his father's shop. Option 2: Harry goes off with his friends to play video games.*
- c. *Sample Consequences: Consequence 1: Harry is teased by his friends. Consequence 2: Harry's father is disappointed.*
- d. *Sample Outcomes: Outcome 1: Harry loses his friends. Outcome 2: Harry feels guilty.*
- e. *Sample: I think the author develops the path in which Harry goes off with his friends and disappoints his father. I choose this path because being thought well of by friends is very important to young adolescents.*

## Assess and Reteach

Use these guidelines to determine if students need the **Reteaching Worksheet**.

- **Practice Worksheet A:** Students should answer at least three out of four items correctly.
- **Practice Worksheet B:** Students should fill in the decision tree in item 1 completely, including the decision Harry faces expressed as a question, two likely options, and a logical outcome for each.

For students who need reteaching, review the **Student Lesson Summary**. Focus on the **Academic Vocabulary**. **Then** brainstorm one or two new decision-making examples from U.S. history. Work through the steps with students. Then, have students complete the **Reteaching Worksheet**, p. 150.

### Answer Key: Reteaching Worksheet

1. *Option: Sample: The narrator refuses to obey the teacher.*
2. *Consequence: Sample: The narrator is sent to the principal's office.*
3. *Outcome: Sample: The narrator never stands up for herself again.*
4. *Answers will vary.*